

Encourages experienced service members to join the Selected Reserves by providing 180 days of free health coverage

Washington, D.C. Congressman Sanford Bishop (D-GA) announced today that the U.S. House of Representatives approved his amendment to H.R. 5658, the Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, to provide 180 days of transitional health care for soldiers in the United States Military who choose to voluntarily separate from active duty and join the Selected Reserves (SELRES). The Defense Authorization bill overwhelmingly passed the House last night by a vote of 383-26.

“The brave men and women who join the ranks of our military deserve every consideration upon their release from active duty. Transitional health coverage would provide a great deal of comfort to members and their families as they move to civilian life,” said Congressman Bishop.

Currently, when an active duty service member retires or is involuntarily separated from the military service, he or she is afforded 180 days of transitional health care at no cost. Conversely, those service members who have served honorably and simply leave active duty at the end of their contractual agreement are not afforded transitional health care – even if they have agreed to continue serving in the Selected Reserves.

The 180 days of transitional health care will allow the separating service members health care coverage as they return to the civilian work force or continue their education. With the potential to retain 13,000 additional trained Soldiers, Sailors, Marines or Airmen for the reserve forces, the legislation could save Guard and Ready Reserves significant retraining costs as well as provide them with more highly trained personnel to fight the Global War on Terror. The legislation also provides service members’ families with health care coverage.

“Without the right incentives to retain trained and experienced Guard and Reserves forces, we will face greater challenges keeping the threat of terrorism at bay. We must retain these highly skilled men and women in the interest of national security,” Congressman Bishop said.

The legislation is supported by the National Guard Army/Air, the Army Reserve, the Navy Reserve, the Marine Corps Reserve, the Air Force Reserve, and the Coast Guard Reserve.